

## ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTION OF OWEN BARTLETT

Evelyn McClure conducting interview at Green Valley History Day  
11/6/1999

EM Who was the first person in your family to settle in Sonoma County?

OB I would say it was great grandfather, not sure where they came from. May have migrated out from the east coast. Ended up in Graton. My great uncle went to school at Green Valley. My mother was born in Graton.

EM Give me their names please

OB Great grandparents on my mother's side were Homer and Myrtle Johnson, my mother was Marie Johnson, Aunt Wanda and Aunt Wilma. They all went to Green Valley School. They were all born here in the early 1900's. They lived across from the Green Valley School. My mother could look out her bedroom window and see the school. It burnt in 1929, so it was before that.

EM What did your grandparents do here?

OB They were farmers and ranchers. They had sheep. Eventually they moved to the Cloverdale area. The rest of the family stayed in the Green Valley area. I came here in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. During the 7<sup>th</sup> grade I was the only 7<sup>th</sup> grader. The teacher's name at the time was Don Williams. He said that if you feel you should move into the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and can pass the test requirements we'll just move you into the 8<sup>th</sup>. If it doesn't work out they will just move me back down. Turned out that I graduated the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 19, Don was an excellent teacher, I had really great time.

EM Had he been a teacher there a long time?

OB I think only three years. It was a great school, a total of 50 students. My 8<sup>th</sup> grade class had 10 students. Classes were small. My sister went there too for a few years, then we moved over to Elphic Rd.

EM Was Don the only teacher there?

OB No, there was a lady teacher there. I think she lives in Bodega Bay, I don't remember her name. Had a lot of good friends there. The Maddox's, Shook, Taylors.

EM So after you graduated 8<sup>th</sup> grade did you go on to high school?



OB Yes, went to Analay High School and graduated. Some junior college, got married when I was 19. Was in the California National Guard for 6 years.

EM What would a typical day at Green Valley School be like? Say you are in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. How did you go through a day of classes. Where you all in the same room?

OB There were two rooms, they split up the younger ones in one room and the 6-8<sup>th</sup> graders in the other. An open type classroom. They would get their assignments and the teacher would work around the classroom from group to group by class.

EM Would they gather in groups around the room? Would they go by subject, do math, etc?

OB Pretty much like that. It was a fun experience for me.

EM What did you do at recess?

OB Played basketball and baseball. If there were enough of us we would get a team together and go play at other schools.

It was unique, it wouldn't be uncommon for some kids to ride their horse to school. Some rode bicycles, the roads were paved. There was a bus, some kids rode the bus.

There were meetings, PTA, pot luck dinners. We got to know all the kids parents and neighbors. A close-knit place.

I remember one time my brother and I went hunting for quail. We were walking through the brush and flushed out some birds. I swung around and shot at the quail and also shot my brother. It was quite some distance so he wasn't hurt too bad. But did get some BB's in his shoulder and face. By the time we walked back home it was dark and we were going to the school that night for a pot luck. The only person I felt I could tell and get some help was my teacher Don Williams. When we got to the school my brother was holding his face so no one would see, my parents didn't notice anything. We got to the school and went to the office. My brother, Tom, sat there while I went to get Mr. Williams. I said I've got a real problem and explained to him what happened. Can you help me get them out? He got some alcohol and tweezers. They weren't in too deep, so he got them out and everything was fine.

He used to also teach music lessons. He played the accordion. In the evenings I would go by and play the accordion. I can't play any longer, but I loved it. Our family was pretty good size, 70-80 sometimes. We would get together for a



family day and they would ask me to get up there and play. I'd play all these polkas and everybody would get out there and dance.

EM Tell me more about your mother's family. Were there many children?

OB In her family, she had two sisters and one brother.

EM And your dad's side?

OB He had nine brothers and three sisters.

EM So when did this family come to Sonoma County?

OB Actually they lived in San Pedro area and moved up here in the 1930's. My dad was a farmer and also a contractor in the area. He got his contractor's license in 1947 or 1948. I remember him studying for that. His name was Charles, he passed away maybe 9 or 10 years. He built houses all over So. Co.

EM If your mother saw the school burn, do you remember who actually worked on rebuilding the school?

OB No I don't, I have no idea. My mother might know. Back in the 1920's it might have been just a group of people.

EM Did you bring your lunch to school, did they ever provide meals?

OB They had a little kitchen there, and did do some cooking. They had one or two ladies come in to prepare lunches. And they had snacks and milk.

EM Can you remember anything else that stands out, any special visitors to the school?

OB Sorry, I don't recall.

EM What did they do for 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation?

OB It was a little outside ceremony. Weather at that time was usually nice. Some kids gave speeches. Usually at that age most kids were pretty shy. Not as outgoing.

EM You've said that your contractor business took you to many other states and areas. Did you do any building in this area?

OB In Sebastopol I did the Brookhaven Estates, near Brookhaven School. And a number of homes in the Ragle Rd. area.



EM What was the land before you built, was it orchards?

OB No it was just a pasture.

EM Did I ask you where your grandparents came from?

OB They came from the east (asking someone else) they came from Kansas.

EM Do you have any photographs of them, any old pictures?

OB Yes, my mother has some.

EM Maybe we could make copies of some of them for the collection.

OB I'm sure that she would be willing to do that, maybe she has some of the school. He went to the old school and the new one. Her sister and brother also went to the old school.

END OF TAPE